

Appl. No. 10/802,177  
Amdt. dated Dec. 20, 2004  
Reply to Office action of August 25, 2004

**REMARKS**

Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the indicated allowability of claim 6 if rewritten in independent form. Claim 6 depends on claim 1, which is believed to be allowable for at least the reasons discussed herein. Accordingly, claim 6 has not been amended herein. However, Applicant reserves the right to cast claim 6 into independent form at a later date, if necessary.

Claims 1-5 and 7-9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Ziehm (U.S. Patent No. 6,201,483). Traversal of this rejection is made for at least the following reasons. Ziehm does not disclose a cam coupled to a steering linkage bar of a watercraft, as required by independent claims 1 and 8. The Examiner relies on sensor actuator 30 of Ziehm as being equivalent to the claimed cam. However, as described in Ziehm, the sensor actuator 30 is "a bar of metal or plastic material" and operates such that, when the boat's steering control means is centered, the sensor actuator 30 "reflects a sufficient amount of IR energy from transmitter 18a back to receiver 18b and thereby triggers proximity sensor 18." (col. 3, ll. 1-10). Even given the broadest reasonable interpretation, the term 'cam', in its ordinary usage as it would be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art, cannot be interpreted as being equivalent to the sensor actuator 30 of Ziehm. The term 'cam', as defined in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary found at <<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=cam>> is "a rotating or sliding piece in a mechanical linkage used especially in transforming rotary motion into linear motion or vice versa." The sensor actuator 30 of Ziehm does not operate to transform rotary motion into linear motion or vice versa. Rather, as discussed above, the sensor actuator 30 of

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Ziehm merely reflects IR energy from a transmitter to a receiver, which triggers a proximity sensor. The triggering of the proximity sensor causes the sensor to close a circuit 20 that is connected to the boat's electrical system. Thus, there is no motion being transformed by the sensor actuator 30.

Further, Ziehm does not disclose a switch coupled to a fixed portion of the watercraft, wherein the cam activates the switch when a rudder of the watercraft is in a centered position, as recited in independent claim 1. The Examiner relies on switch 24 of Ziehm as being equivalent to the claimed switch. However, the switch 24 of Ziehm is not activated by a cam when a rudder of the watercraft is in a centered position. Rather, Ziehm describes the switch 24 as "a manually operated switch". (col. 2, ll. 54-55). Ziehm further describes the switch being located on a panel adjacent the boat's steering wheel or helm so that the "switch 24 can be conveniently reached and actuated by the boat operator." (col. 2, ll. 64-65).

Further Ziehm does not disclose means for contacting the cam when the watercraft is centered, as recited in independent claim 8. As discussed above, Ziehm does not disclose a cam coupled to a steering linkage bar of a watercraft. However, assuming arguendo, that the sensor actuator 30 can be considered equivalent to the claimed cam, as contended by the Examiner, the sensor actuator 30 is not contacted when the watercraft is centered. As described in Ziehm, the sensor actuator 30 operates with an optical proximity sensor. The optical proximity sensor has a transmitter that generates an infrared beam and a receiver which detects infrared energy reflected back toward the proximity sensor when an object is aligned with and sufficiently close to the transmitter. It is well known in the art of sensors, that the optical proximity sensor described in Ziehm is a non-contact sensor. Accordingly,

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there is nothing in Ziehm that contacts the sensor actuator 30 when the watercraft is centered.

Instead, when the boat in Ziehm is centered, the sensor actuator 30 is merely aligned close to a non-contact proximity sensor.

Because Ziehm does not disclose each and every limitation set forth in independent claims 1 and 8, Ziehm cannot anticipate such claims. Withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

In consideration of the foregoing analysis, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in a condition for allowance and notice to that effect is hereby requested. If it is determined that the application is not in a condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to initiate a telephone interview with the undersigned attorney to expedite prosecution of the present application.

If there are any further fees required by this communication, or if no check is enclosed, please charge such fees to our Deposit Account No. 16-0820, Order No. 36185.

Respectfully submitted,  
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